



## **State of Connecticut**

### **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL**

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## **Testimony**

### **In support of H.B. 6690 An Act Concerning Court Proceedings and the Protection of Animals**

**Judiciary Committee  
April 4, 2013**

Senator Coleman, Senator Kissel, Representative Fox, Representative Rebimbas and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. I come before you today to testify in strong support of HB 6690, "An Act Concerning Court Proceedings and the Protection of Animals."

Animals hold a very near and dear place in my heart. For many years I have rescued and fostered animals, and have been very involved with local shelters. It breaks my heart to hear stories like Alex Bernards. In 2011, Bernard stabbed his puppy, Princess – a 1 year old Staffordshire terrier, 29 times. It's incredible to let animal abusers like Bernard get away with a heinous crime like this with nothing more than a slap on the wrist.

Individuals who pose a threat to animals have also been proven to be a serious threat to humans.

According to a 1997 study done by the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and Northeastern University, animal abusers are five times more likely to commit violent crimes against people and four times more likely to commit property crimes than are individuals without a history of animal abuse.

Many studies during the last 25 years have demonstrated that violent offenders frequently have childhood and adolescent histories of serious and repeated animal cruelty. The FBI has recognized the connection since the 1970s, when its analysis of the lives of serial killers

suggested that most had killed or tortured animals as children. Other research has shown consistent patterns of animal cruelty among perpetrators of more common forms of violence, including child abuse, spouse abuse, and elder abuse. In fact, the American Psychiatric Association considers animal cruelty one of the diagnostic criteria of conduct disorder.

History is full of high-profile examples of this connection:

- **Patrick Sherrill**, who killed 14 coworkers at a post office and then shot himself, had a history of stealing local pets and allowing his own dog to attack and mutilate them.
- **Earl Kenneth Shriner**, who raped, stabbed, and mutilated a 7-year-old boy, had been widely known in his neighborhood as the man who put firecrackers in dogs' rectums and strung up cats.
- **Brenda Spencer**, who opened fire at a San Diego school, killing two children and injuring nine others, had repeatedly abused cats and dogs, often by setting their tails on fire.

Columbine High School students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, who shot and killed 12 classmates before turning their guns on themselves, bragged about mutilating animals to their friends – today we can do something to ensure the courts take animal abuse seriously and use the tools this legislature has put in place to prevent violence from occurring in our communities. I realize this is a unconventional idea, history of the court's lenient rulings regarding animal abusers clearly shows an advocate would be helpful in ensuring the courts understand the seriousness of these types of crimes and to give a voice to the defenseless animals who can't speak for themselves. Animal abuse and stricter penalties for it must be taken seriously.